

# **What Works To Reduce Recidivism**

**Presentation to the  
Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice**

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**Roger Przybylski  
RKC Group  
[www.rkcgroup.org](http://www.rkcgroup.org)  
rogerkp@comcast.net**

# Evidence Concerning Recidivism and Desistance From Crime

- Harsher sanctions do not have positive impact on recidivism
- Supervision alone does not reduce recidivism; supervision integrated with treatment does
- Time period immediately following release from prison is riskiest
- Work, marriage, reduced consumption of drugs are important factors in desistance
  - People who desist from crime are those who are better integrated into pro-social roles in the family, workplace and community

# Evidence on Desistance

- Desistance is a process, not an event
- Often characterized by ambivalence; progress and set-back, hope and despair
  - Hope and social support promote identity transformation and desistance
  - Collateral consequences of conviction/imprisonment impede desistance
- Desistance requires motivation, acquisition of new skills (human capital), and relationships that facilitate and help maintain change (social capital)

# Reexamining Evidence-Based Practice in Community Corrections: Beyond “A Confined View” of What Works (McNeill et al. 2012)

- Goals of probation are multiple and can conflict
  - Recidivism reduction; punishment/compliance; victim reparation; improved judicial decision making
- Each goal requires a different measure of success
- Must be aware of measurement problems associated with official statistics on recidivism
- Difference between primary and secondary desistance

# Reinventing Probation Council Report

- Public wants safety first; but also value for the victim, offender and community
- Probation is well-positioned to contribute to public safety by holding offenders accountable and repairing broken lives
- Must “own” recidivism
- Supervise probationers in the neighborhood
- Build community involvement and support

# Evidence-Based Sentencing

- Goal of every sentence should not only be punishment, but also recidivism reduction
- Preference for community-based sanctions
  - Reserve prison for violent offenders
- Judges and prosecutors should know the offender's risk level and criminogenic needs
- Judges should have the discretion to sentence based on offender risks and needs
- Sentencing outcomes should be evaluated

# Doing Justice Executive Summit (October 2013)

41 national organizations and associations representing all aspects of criminal justice reached consensus on the following principles

- Dispositions in the criminal justice system should be based on the characteristics of the offender in addition to the characteristics of the offense.
- Criminal justice professionals should be required to consider offenders' habilitation needs and risk for recidivism, as determined by validated assessment tools, when imposing criminal sentences, ordering the conditions of treatment or supervision, and responding to infractions and technical violations.
- Criminal justice professionals should be required to consider whether a proposed sentence or disposition is likely to reduce crime, improve the psychosocial functioning of the offender, and make optimum use of taxpayer dollars.
- Research-based evidence, and not personal convictions or beliefs, should guide the above considerations.

# Recidivism can be Reduced

- Effective interventions share common features
  - Principles of effective correctional intervention

**Assess Actuarial Risk/Needs**

**Increase Positive Reinforcement**

**Enhance Intrinsic Motivation**

**Engage On-going Support  
in the Community**

**Target Interventions**

**Measure Processes/Practices**

**Skill Train With Directed Practice**

**Provide Feedback**



# Principles of Effective Intervention

- **RISK PRINCIPLE:** focus on higher-risk offenders
- **NEED PRINCIPLE:** target multiple criminogenic needs
  - Assess risk and need using valid, actuarial instrument
- Use intensive, behavioral interventions

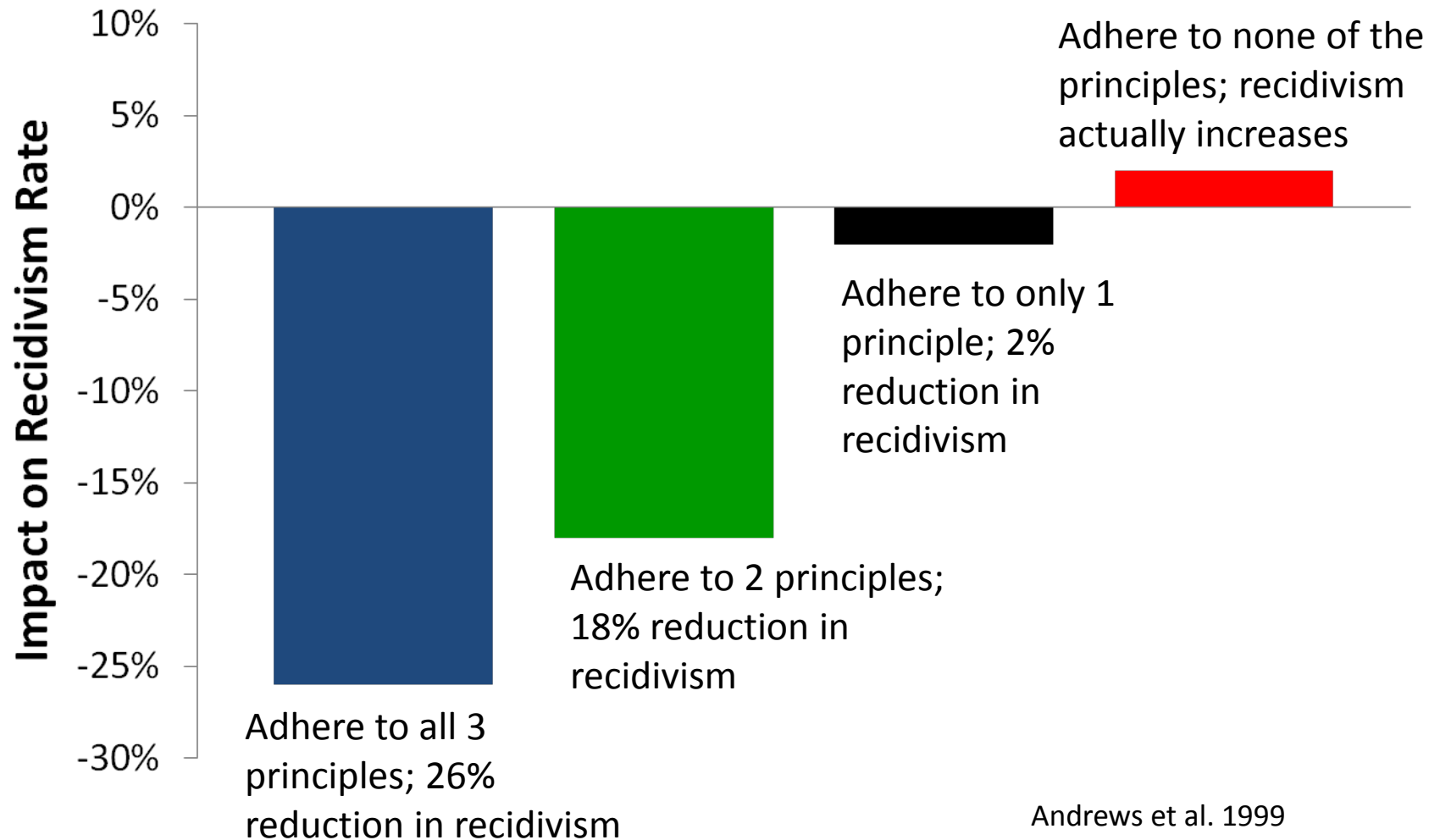
# Use Intensive, Behavioral Interventions

- **Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions**
  - Used in a variety of settings with variety of offenders
- Several manualized programs are in use in the criminal justice system
  - Each of the following has been rigorously evaluated and found to be effective:
    - Aggression Replacement Training ®
    - Moral Reconation Therapy ®
    - Reasoning and Rehabilitation
    - Relapse Prevention Therapy
    - Thinking for a Change (T4C)

# Principles of Effective Intervention

- **RISK PRINCIPLE:** focus on high-risk offenders
- **NEED PRINCIPLE:** target multiple criminogenic needs
  - Assess risk and need using valid, actuarial instrument
- **RESPONSIVITY PRINCIPLE:** match style and mode of intervention to the offender's learning style and abilities

# Impact of Adhering to the Risk, Need, and Responsivity (RNR) Principles



# Risk and Need as a Quadrant Model (Marlowe, 2009)

		Prognostic Risk	
		High	Low
<b>Criminogenic Need</b>	<b>High</b>	Proximal Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervision</li> <li>• Treatment</li> </ul> Distal Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro-social habilitation</li> <li>• Adaptive habilitation</li> </ul>	Proximal Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treatment</li> </ul> Distal Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Pro-social habilitation)</li> <li>• Adaptive habilitation</li> </ul>
	<b>Low</b>	Proximal Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervision</li> <li>• Pro-social habilitation</li> </ul> Distal Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Adaptive habilitation)</li> </ul>	Proximal Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary prevention</li> <li>• Diversion</li> </ul>

# Interactions With Offenders Matter

- Interactions between supervising officer and offender are as important as content of programming
- Enhance offender motivation to change
  - Motivational Interviewing (MI) is an effective technique to elicit and strengthen motivation to change

# Desistance is a process often characterized by ambivalence

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## Stages of Change

Prochaska and DiClemente's Stages of Change Model

### 1. **PRECONTEMPLATION**

A person is not seeing a need for a lifestyle or behavior change

### 2. **CONTEMPLATION**

A person is considering making a change but has not decided yet

### 3. **PREPARATION**

A person has decided to make changes and is considering how to make them

### 4. **ACTION**

A person is actively doing something to change

### 5. **MAINTENANCE**

A person is working to maintain the change or new lifestyle, possibly with some temptations to return to the former behavior or small lapses.

**80% of  
people are in  
Stage 1 or 2**

# Interactions With Offenders Matter

- Interactions between supervising officer and offender are as important as content of programming
- Enhance offender motivation to change
  - Motivational Interviewing (MI) is an effective technique to elicit and strengthen motivation to change
- Use positive reinforcement
  - Balance of sanctions and incentives (rewards) aimed at changing offender behavior
  - Four positive for every one negative reinforcement is optimal for long-term behavior change



# Nature of Interactions and Positive Reinforcement Affect Offender Outcomes

- Strategic Training Initiative in Community Supervision (STICS)
  - Probation officer training + coaching on RNR interaction skills produced higher quality interactions with offenders, lower offender recidivism rates
- Study of Wyoming DOC ISP program
  - Use of both sanctions and rewards
  - 4 to 1 reward to punishment ratio produced the best program outcomes